

A CHRISTMAS BIRTHDAY

LUKE 3.21-38

I checked the church calendar and, as far as I can tell, there are no members of our church with birthdays on Christmas Day, though there are several in December.

Jerriann's birthday is this week and Hollie's is next Sunday, the day after Christmas.

For some, having a birthday fall on or near Christmas is a problem.

What Not to Say to a Christmas Baby

- "Oh, you're so blessed – you share a birthday with Jesus!"
- "Merry Birthday!"
- "You must get so many presents!"
- "You must be a very special person."
- "I'm going to wait till the after-Christmas sales so I can get you something bigger."
- "Your sister/brother feels really left out; let's give her/him an extra present, too."

Positive Things about Being a Christmas Baby

- You're pretty much guaranteed to not have to go to school or work on your birthday.
- Your whole family is there for your birthday.
- No one ever forgets your birthday.
- No annoying singer waiters because the restaurant is closed on your birthday.
- At least you're not a Leap Year or April Fool's Day baby.
- Potential for milking pity into a half-birthday celebration in June

Famous people born on Christmas Day:

Isaac Newton
 Clara Barton
 Humphrey Bogart
 Anwar Sadat (Egypt)
 Rod Serling (Twilight Zone)
 Barbara Mandrell

The Old Farmer's Almanac says of the person born Dec. 25: "You are an ardent and assimilating reader, observant, and an interesting and fluent talker. You are honest, conscientious, methodical, and discreet at all times. You are a true and loyal friend and have sincere devotion to your loved ones."

I don't know if this is true of everyone, but I do know that it is true for one person born on Christmas.

Of course, the whole idea behind Christmas is the celebration of the birth of Jesus; therefore every Christmas is a celebration of His birthday.

I am sure that we will all agree that there is no one who better fits the description of "a true and loyal friend" with a "sincere devotion to your loved ones."

In our text for today, Luke tells us that Jesus' 30th birthday was a very significant Christmas season because two great things happened"

1. He was baptized by John the Baptist
2. He began His public ministry

Jesus' baptism did not have anything to do with Him being righteous. Baptism was not a requirement of His being the righteous servant of God. Jesus was baptized because He was the righteous servant of God.

His baptism was His statement to the world that His time had come – that the kingdom of heaven was at hand – and that He was committed to serve as God directed Him no matter what the cost.

And God gave testimony and blessing to the ministry of Jesus as the Messiah and the Savior of all mankind by coming as the Holy Spirit in the physical form of a dove-like appearance and with the same voice with which He created the worlds, He spoke out loud to Jesus.

Just as baptism had nothing to do with defining Jesus as the Son of God, neither does it have anything to do with making us saved or righteous.

Baptism is the first step of obedience for the new Christian. It is our testimony to the world that we have surrendered our lives to Christ and that we are prepared to go and to do whatever He calls us to do.

Not only was Jesus baptized around His 30th birthday, He also began His earthly ministry around this same Christmas season.

The Bible tells us that priests entered into their office at the age of thirty. Of course, Jesus could not be a priest under the Law, because He was of the tribe of Judah and not of the tribe of Levi.

However, we learn from the book of Hebrews that Jesus is a priest, not after the order of the Levites and not under the Law, because Christ preceded the Levites and the Law. In fact, remember that He is the creator of all things.

Jesus is our priest, not after the order of the Levites, but after the order of Melchizedec. We first learn about Melchizedec in **Gen. 18.18-20**.

With an army of only 318 men, Abraham won a significant victory over the armies of four kings. On his way home after the victory, Abraham was met by Melchizedec, the king of Salem, who was also the priest of the most high God.

Abraham recognized the sovereignty and the holiness of Melchizedec and gave him a tithe of all he had gained by his victory.

From **Hebrews 7** we learn that Melchizedec was the *"king of righteousness," and then also king of Salem, meaning 'king of peace,' without father, without mother, without genealogy,*

having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like the Son of God, remains a priest continuously."

This study of Melchizedec is a great study and worthy of our attention, but this morning, our point is to recognize that Jesus of Nazareth was actually the Messiah.

He is a priest forever. He did not serve as a priest during His ministry on Earth and then lay that ministry down upon His death. He has always been our advocate before the Father and He continues in that role even today.

As illustrated in the person of Melchizedec, Jesus Christ is both priest and king. He had an earthly father, Joseph, and, though miraculously conceived, He was born through natural processes to the young Jewish virgin, Mary.

Because of these facts, we have the genealogy which Luke relates to us in the following verses.

But of course, this only applied to the man, Jesus. It does not apply to the Son of God who, as John said, *"was in the beginning with God"* and who is, in fact, very God of very God, who *"was made flesh and dwelt among us"* bearing *"the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."*

So let's look for a moment at this genealogy of Luke. There is much controversy about this genealogy and its variance from that given by Matthew. While this is an interesting study, it is another subject that is not our purpose this morning.

Verse 23 of our text in **Luke 3** says that Jesus "was supposed to be the son of Joseph." This does not mean that this was something that was expected to happen – as we might say "He was supposed to be here by 1:00" – but that everyone of the day took for granted that Jesus was the son of Joseph, the carpenter of Nazareth.

The word "supposed" means "a belief resting not on one's inner feeling or sentiment, but on the due consideration of external grounds, and the weighing and comparing of facts."

And there are several facts concerning Jesus that everyone accepted as truth without question:

- Joseph was married to Jesus' mother, Mary.
- Jesus lived in Joseph's house
- Joseph took Jesus to the Temple for circumcision on the 8th day following his birth
- Joseph took him to Egypt to protect him from Herod and later to Nazareth to provide him a home

The Jewish custom was that he “that brings up, and not he that begets, is called the father.”

So, for all intents and purposes of the Jews, Jesus was the son of Joseph.

There are three points that I would like to make about this genealogy of Jesus provided by Luke.

First, Matthew wrote his gospel primarily to the Jews with the intent of proving that Jesus was the Messiah – the promised seed of Abraham and the rightful heir to the throne of David.

(**NOTE:** Since Jesus is the rightful heir to the throne of David, then the genealogies prove that Joseph also was an heir to the throne, so that, even though we do not know much about him, Joseph himself was a prince of sorts.)

Matthew's genealogy, which stops with Abraham, is given in relationship to Jesus' birth and His entry into the royal lineage of the line of David as the King of the Jews.

Luke, on the other hand, was writing primarily to a Greek audience with the intention of demonstrating that Jesus was not just the Savior of the Jews, but was the Savior of all mankind – both Jew and non-Jew.

Thus Luke associates this genealogy, not with Jesus' birth, but with His baptism and not just with His entry into the lineage of David, but His entry into the lineage of man for the purpose of serving as Savior of the world.

Luke carried the genealogy of Jesus, not just to Abraham, which would make Jesus the son of promise, but beyond Abraham all

the way back to Adam, which makes Jesus the Son of Man – a testimony to the concept that Jesus was fully man.

Secondly, notice how Luke ends the genealogy. (***Read v. 38***)

You will note in the genealogy in your Bible that the phrase “the son of” is used over and over in **verses 23-38** (16x in six verses) while in fact the phrase “the son of” is used only once in the original text – to refer to the relationship between Jesus and Joseph. (*In most Bibles, these words are written in italics to show that they were added by the translators for better understanding.*)

Luke is trying to make a point with this genealogy. He does not include every person in the line from Jesus to Adam, so the phrase “son of” does not mean that a person was the direct father of a descendant. The same thing is true of the word “begat” used by Matthew in his genealogical record.

Luke is not trying to tie every person directly to the person who follows in the genealogy. He is proving the lineage of Jesus.

Leaving out the phrase “the son of,” Luke writes in **verse 23** that Jesus was “***the son of Joseph, of Heli, of Matthat, ...of Zurababel*** (v. 27), in **verse 38** “***of Adam***,” and finally, “***of God***.”

Jesus, the son of Joseph, the carpenter of Nazareth, is actually the Son of God – a testimony to the concept that Jesus was fully God.

Thirdly, there are many questions about this genealogy of Luke, many of which cannot be easily reconciled. But there is one thing that can be said of this genealogy with certainty: There was never any question about its authenticity by even the bitterest of enemies of Christianity in its earliest days.

If you have ever done any genealogy work, you know how difficult it is to verify relationships after about the fourth or fifth generation. Yet this genealogy extends through all of known time back to the original creation.

How marvelous that such a lineage could have been preserved throughout so many thousands of years, especially in light of all that the descendants of Adam and of Abraham experienced.

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- Flood of Noah and the restoration of the race of man
- Tower of Babel, the confusion of languages, and the creation of nations
- The 400 years of slavery in Egypt
- The 70 years of captivity in Babylon

And still the lineage was preserved.

Every generation – by some method – seemed to have recognized the person of the previous generation through whom this finest of threads was preserved.

It would seem that only by the supernatural intervention of God could such an event be possible – to bring about, through these successive generations of men, the birth of the only begotten Son of God.

The miracle of Christmas is so much more than just the miracle of the virgin birth and the coming of the Christ-child.

The miracle is that God would care enough for this fallen and corrupt creation not to abandon it, but to preserve a line of inheritance throughout the ages of man so that in the fullness of time – when the time was just right according to His perfect plan – He could give the very best that Heaven had to offer on behalf of all mankind.

So who is this Child whose birthday we celebrate every Christmas?

- To the Jews He was just another noted rabbi who was confused about the workings of God.
- To Islam, He is only a messenger, born of a virgin, but whose importance was transcended by Muhammad.
- To the Mormons, He is referred to as Savior, but they believe that, instead of being eternal God, that Jesus was born to the god of this world who was at one time a man himself and is only one among an infinite number of gods.
- To the JW's, He is a kind of god. He was created by God and is neither the eternal Son of God nor part of the Trinity.

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- To Scientologists, He is only a good man and a good teacher who Himself was a product of reincarnation and offers no hope of salvation.
- To the world, He is the baby in the manger that completes the Christmas scene – lost amidst the halos of Mary, the songs of hovering angels, the sounds of a stable, and the glitter of tinsel and the decorations of the season.

But for those who know Him as Savior, He is...

- Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. (Isa. 9:6)
- Author and Perfecter of our Faith (Heb. 12:2)
- Alpha and Omega, Beginning and End (Rev. 1:8; 22:13)
- Bread of Life (John 6:35)
- Good Shepherd (John 10:11,14)
- Head of the Church (Eph. 1:22)
- Hope of Glory (Col. 1:27)
- Lamb of God (John 1:29)
- Lord of Glory (1 Cor. 2:8)
- Our Redemption (1 Cor. 1:30)
- Son of the Most High God (Lk. 1:32)
- The way, the truth, and the life (John 14:6)
- Judge of the living and the dead (Acts 10:42)
- King of the Ages (Rev. 15:3)

Ray Pritchard said...

If he is not God, we are fools to worship Him.

If he is, we would be fools not to.

Napoleon Bonaparte is one of the most well-known names in history. He was one of the greatest military commanders of all time and was, at one time, the Emperor of the French. He controlled an empire that spanned all of Europe.

What did Napoleon say about Jesus?

I know men and I tell you that Jesus Christ is no mere man. Between him and every other person in the world there is no possible term of comparison.

Alexander, Caesar, Charlemagne, and I founded empires. But on what did we rest the creations of our genius? Upon force. Jesus Christ founded His empire upon love; and at this hour millions of people would die for Him.

Everything in Christ astonishes me. His spirit overawes me, and His will confounds me ... I search in vain in history to find anyone similar to Jesus Christ, or anything that can approach the gospel.

Dr. Philip Schaff, the famed historian, said...

Jesus of Nazareth, without money and arms, conquered more millions than Alexander, Caesar, Mahomet, and Napoleon. (*and someone else added...* or Lenin, Stalin, Hitler, and Mao Tse Tung!)

C. S. Lewis said there are only three possible reactions to Christ:

- You can shut Him up for a fool,
- You can spit at Him and kill him as a demon, or
- You can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God.

But you cannot write Him off as simply a good teacher or a good man, and you certainly cannot ignore Him.

Most of us are very familiar with an essay printed by Judson Press in 1926 that was an adaptation from a sermon by Dr. James Allan Francis entitled "One Solitary Life."

I want to close this morning with a rendition of that essay which reminds us of the impact on the world and on human hearts of this one Child whose birthday we celebrate every year at Christmas.

One Solitary Life

He was born in an obscure village
The child of a peasant woman
He grew up in another obscure village
Where he worked in a carpenter shop
Until he was thirty

He never wrote a book
He never held an office
He never went to college
He never visited a big city
He never travelled more than two hundred miles
From the place where he was born
He did none of the things
Usually associated with greatness
He had no credentials but himself

He was only thirty three
His friends ran away
One of them denied him
He was turned over to his enemies
And went through the mockery of a trial
He was nailed to a cross between two thieves
While dying, his executioners gambled for his clothing
The only property he had on earth

When he was dead
He was laid in a borrowed grave
Through the pity of a friend

Nineteen centuries have come and gone
And today Jesus is the central figure of the human race
And the leader of mankind's progress
All the armies that have ever marched
All the navies that have ever sailed
All the parliaments that have ever sat
All the kings that ever reigned put together
Have not affected the life of mankind on earth
As powerfully as that one solitary life

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